

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-7 and 9-14 are pending in this application. Claims 7, 9, and 12 are independent. Claims 5 and 6 have been withdrawn from consideration. In light of the amendments and remarks made herein, supplemental to the Reply After Final filed on November 18, 2003, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections.

**Examiner Interview**

Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for the interview conducted on January 13, 2004. During the interview, the parties agreed that claims 10 and 11 are not anticipated by the *Kanazawa et al.* reference.

By this Amendment, Applicants are adding new claims 12-14 for consideration by the Examiner. It is respectfully submitted that these claims are allowable over the art as previously cited by the Examiner as *Kanazawa et al.* fails to teach or suggest a biasing member biasing the worm shaft toward the worm wheel to reduce or eliminate backlash.

It is respectfully submitted that this Preliminary Amendment is being submitted supplemental to the Reply After Final filed on November 18, 2003, but unentered.

Additionally, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider Applicants' arguments regarding the element recited in claim 7, namely, a steering shaft on which a worm wheel

is disposed. Applicants maintain that shaft 200 is not a steering shaft and, thus, Kanazawa et al. fails to teach or suggest a steering shaft on which a worm wheel is disposed.

Conclusion

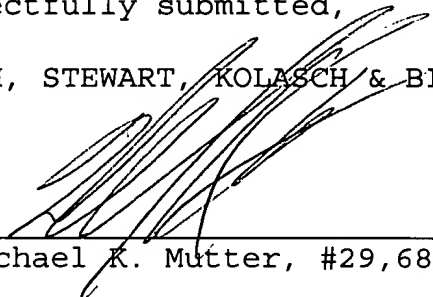
Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Catherine M. Voisinet (Reg. No. 52,327) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By

  
Michael K. Mutter, #29,680

MKM/CMV/jdm  
1560-0348P

P.O. Box 747  
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747  
(703) 205-8000